

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
BOARD OF EDUCATION
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

MINUTES:
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STANDARDS OF QUALITY

September 25, 2002

Members of the Standing Committee on the Standards of Quality met on September 25, 2002, in Senate Room B of the General Assembly Building, Richmond, Virginia, with the following members present:

Dr. Gary L. Jones, chair
Mrs. Susan L. Genovese
Mr. Scott Goodman
Mr. Thomas M. Jackson, Jr.

Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Jones, chair, presided and called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

Virginia Preschool Initiative and Preschool Programs in General:

An overview of the Virginia Preschool Initiative for At-Risk Four Year Olds was presented to the Board of Education subcommittee on the Standards of Quality. The report indicated that Virginia is in a good position to receive federal grant monies for the preschool program due to Virginia's proactive involvement in the areas of preschool services and early reading services. The report discussed the history of the initiative, the requirements for participation, the application process, and the reasons some school divisions do not participate in the program.

Board members inquired into whether the Department of Education has data indicating what percentage of students that participate in the initiative are successful when taking the prekindergarten screening assessment. The board was informed that the success rate is difficult to determine since there is no requirement to screen preschool students and due to the inability to track students in preschool programs as they move on to prekindergarten screening.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction suggested that an incentive be offered to school divisions to encourage them to collect data on the success of students who participate in the preschool initiative.

A general report on the success of students participating in early childhood programs was also presented to the subcommittee. The report discussed three different studies of high quality early childhood programs in North Carolina, Michigan, and Georgia. The report illustrated the consistent and long-term success for students that were provided access to high quality early

childhood programs. The report also included the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission's findings relating to funding of the Virginia Preschool Initiative and public comments regarding funding of the initiative and its impact on localities.

Early Intervention Reading Initiative:

An overview of the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) was presented to the Board of Education. The overview included information on how this initiative was first implemented to provide intervention services to Kindergarten and first grade students who lacked readiness skills. Implementation of the program has changed over the years to include students in grades 1-3 and the testing cycle will occur now on a spring-to-spring cycle. Comments from teachers in Kindergarten and first grade have been favorable stating that the EIRI program has assisted them in clearly defining academic benchmarks for their students. The funding for this program is formula-driven along with matching funds from local school divisions.

Board members questioned the possibility of tracking K-3 students with prior pre-school experiences and their performance on the EIRI assessments. The board was informed that it is difficult to obtain information of students' preschool experiences.

Standards of Quality: Reading Specialists:

A presentation on reading specialists was provided to the Board of Education. The presentation included information about the current requirements in the SOQ, the findings in the JLARC study, a summary of public comments regarding reading specialists and a review of the research. The research included information on reading reforms in Alabama and California, scientifically-based research on effective reading practices, and the changing roles of reading specialists. Also, included in the research review was information on effective teaching practices in high poverty schools.

Board members questioned the impact of funding reading specialists contrasted with the funding costs to lower class sizes. Members wanted to know if there was any possible overlap of programs such as reading specialists and the Early Intervention Reading Initiative. The Board was informed that there is a separate endorsement for reading specialists.

Final comments by the board included that a possible recommendation to the General Assembly would be to include the reading initiative in the SOQ and to have reading specialists play a role in that program. Dr. DeMary concluded by stating that the classroom teacher is the child's first reading teacher. Therefore, it is important to make sure that classroom teachers are competent in teaching reading.

Technical Revisions: SOQ:

A brief update was given on the technical revisions to the SOQ.

Outline of Annual Report on Conditions and Needs:

The committee members received a copy of the draft outline of the 2002 Annual Report on the Condition and Needs of the Public Schools in Virginia. The outline incorporates the legally required information as well as the recommendations of committee members when they

discussed the outline at the meeting in May 2002. Members were asked to review the outline and to give staff any suggestions or comments as soon as possible.

The first review of the Board's report is scheduled for the October 16, 2002, meeting. Final review and approval is anticipated at the November meeting. Dr. Jones said the committee will take the outline under advisement and will let staff know of members' suggestions for additions and changes.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Submitted by:

Margaret N. Roberts
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